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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KOCI](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT HOLDS DONOR MEETING ON CHILD LABOR,
WORRIED ABOUT LACK OF SUPPORT

REF: KATHMANDU 817

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) In a June 1 meeting, the Government of Nepal's (GON) Minister of Labor and Transport Management (MOLTM) Ramesh Lekhak and MOLTM Secretary Deependra Bickram Thapa requested donor and NGO support for the GON's Master Plan on Child Labor that established a goal of eliminating all child labor in Nepal by 2014. Secretary Thapa suggested the GON and donors form a "donor consortium" to coordinate efforts. He announced that the GON planned to strengthen its high-level ministerial committee to mainstream the issue of child labor, and requested donor assistance to develop an information management system for better program monitoring. Participating NGOs expressed their doubts about the feasibility of eliminating all forms of child labor in Nepal by 2014; instead the group challenged the GON to address the sustainability of child labor projects. Thapa acknowledged the group's concerns and pledged better government cooperation. End Summary.

LABOR SECRETARY HIGHLIGHTS GON EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD LABOR,
REQUESTS DONOR SUPPORT

12. (SBU) During a June 1 donor meeting, in which the U.S. was the only donor present but INGO and NGOs were invited, Minister Lekhak requested donor support to accomplish GON goals to combat child labor. Secretary Thapa gave a presentation on "Creating Synergy Among Partners for Effective and Efficient Implementation of the National Master Plan on Child Labor." Nepal's Master Plan on Child Labor, which was revised in 2004, aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor by 2009 and all forms of child labor by 2014. Thapa requested that the GON and donor representatives create a "donor consortium" to mobilize funds and coordinate their use. He announced that the GON planned to strengthen its high-level inter-ministerial committee to mainstream the issue of child labor. Secretary Thapa stressed that commitment from all sectors of society, not just the GON, was needed to eliminate child labor. The NGOs and INGOs at the session responded to the Secretary's presentation by challenging the contention that Nepal could realistically eliminate all forms of child labor by 2014.

¶3. (SBU) The MOLTM Secretary said that the GON needed to develop a monitoring and evaluation system, and asked donors to provide information to assist the GON to develop an information management system. He requested continued funding for the Timebound Program, scheduled to finish in August 2006. The goal of the Timebound Program is to reduce the number of children engaged in seven of the worst forms of child labor in 22 districts of Nepal. The Timebound Program focuses on influencing GON policy, public awareness activities, and economic empowerment initiatives. Thapa stressed that the Timebound Program was important to the success of Nepal's Master Plan, and distributed a paper titled "Continuation of Good Practices of the Timebound Program and Addressing Future Gaps" that concluded that a three-year Phase II of the Timebound Program should continue to target elimination of seven of the worst forms of child labor and address issues of child soldiers at a cost of USD 1.9 million.

¶4. (SBU) Pracha Vasuprasat, Acting Director of the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) in Nepal, subsequently explained to Emboff that no funding had been pledged by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) or any other donor for Timebound Phase II. Anja Elisabeth Hem, Associate Expert for ILO-IPEC, told us that ILO-IPEC was planning to meet formally with all donors to ascertain whether there was any interest in supporting Timebound Phase II. Hem opined that the June 1 meeting had been called in part due to GON concern over Timebound Phase II funding, and also as an opportunity for the new GON to demonstrate its commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

SUSTAINABILITY AN ISSUE

¶5. (SBU) During the meeting, a USAID colleague stressed that a major donor concern was the sustainability of child labor projects. She noted that the GON needed better coordination to avoid duplication of efforts and waste of resources. Secretary Thapa acknowledged that the goals of the Master

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Plan were ambitious and that was why he was seeking better cooperation and participation from donors and stakeholders. He also acknowledged that there had been gaps in the past between formulation of goals and implementation, and that GON committees did not always work properly. Thapa announced that the GON was planning to allocate funds in the upcoming annual budget for innovations that have worked well, though not a large amount, and asked for donor suggestions.

DOL RECOGNIZED ON CHILD LABOR DAY

¶6. (SBU) On Child Labor Day, June 12, Emboff accepted a certificate of appreciation on behalf of DOL, awarded by ILO-Nepal for DOL's outstanding service to the cause of elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Nepal. Minister Lekhak conveyed the GON's commitment to provide necessary assistance to eradicate child labor.

COMMENT

¶7. (SBU) Most NGOs and INGOs complain that the lack of engagement from previous governments contributed to the lack of success of Phase I of the Timebound Program. Although the new government seeks assistance to address the important problem of child labor, donors appear mired in the past and unwilling to respond to the government. The USG will continue to support Nepal in its effort to address child labor by funding two major programs. One, the Brighter Futures Program Phase II, will create public awareness of the importance of education and provide access to non-formal education for children removed from or at risk of working in one of the worst forms of child labor. Two, the Sustainable

Elimination of Bonded Labor Program Phase II, will focus on withdrawing bonded child laborers and reintegrating them into their communities, as well as conduct awareness activities to prevent at-risk children from becoming bonded laborers.

SCHWARTZ